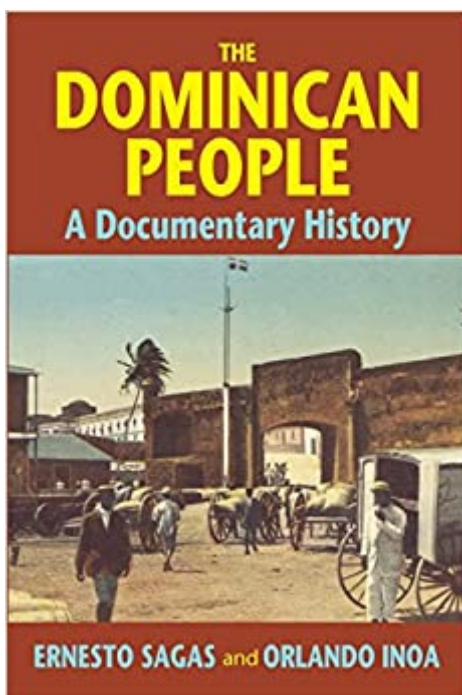


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The Dominican People



Synopsis

The vanquished Taíno Indians, the Spanish conquistadors, rebellious slaves, common folk, foreign invaders, bloody dictators, gallant heroes, charismatic politicians, and committed rebels--all have left their distinct imprint on Dominican society and left behind printed records. Nevertheless, the five-hundred-year history of the people of the Dominican Republic has yet to be told through its documents. Although there has been a considerable production of documentary compilations in the Dominican Republic--particularly during the Trujillo era--few of these are known outside the country, and none has ever been translated into English. *The Dominican People: A Documentary History* bridges this gap by providing an annotated collection of documents related to the history of the Dominican Republic and its people. The compilation features annotated documents on some of the transcendental events that have taken place on the island since pre-Columbian times: the extermination of the Taíno Indians, sugar and African slavery, the establishment of French Saint Dominique, independence from Haiti and from Spain, caudillo politics, U.S. interventionism, the Trujillo dictatorship, and contemporary politics.

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Customer Reviews

Ernesto Sagas and Orlando Inoa have compiled a concise and satisfying anthology of documents on Dominican history. To the extent to which a collection of documents can have an argument, this one does: that while authoritarian and undemocratic politics are deeply ingrained in Dominican culture, democratic institutions have been slowly but surely taking root over the past several decades. Thus, the overwhelming majority of the documents are political in nature and trace the

origins and character of this authoritarian political culture. Several elements stand out in the history these documents exemplify: Spanish and French colonialism, the Dominican Republic's uneasy relationship with its neighbor Haiti, and U.S. influence form the scaffolding around which Dominican history unfolds. The editors use public speeches and proclamations, treaties, and laws to chronicle the country's shifting relationships with these different external actors and the ways that its political leaders responded, both internally and externally. Many of the documents also suggest the limited economic alternatives open to the country, although economic issues receive more attention in the pre-twentieth-century sections. Still, the links between foreign economic dependence and political authoritarianism are evident. Dominican elites--the political class--could only maintain their status through collaboration and manipulation; most of the population remained alienated from the political system. There are many areas of Dominican history that get short shrift, however. Although the introduction announces the editors' intent to include the history of ordinary Dominicans alongside documentation of "high politics," the latter comprise the bulk of the selections. The lives of those outside the formal political sphere--that is, the majority of the Dominican population--remain elusive. The editors explicitly acknowledge their decision to avoid any discussion of Dominican culture in the volume. This decision gives the collection a curiously unidimensional quality and seems to preclude the use of these documents to develop a more in-depth or multilayered analysis of the country's history in the classroom. History, in this collection, is a series of political events rather than a study of people and society. Even in the realm of traditional politics, some key issues remain unaddressed and key questions unanswered. Why did Trujillo suddenly adopt viciously anti-Haitian ideologies and policies in the late 1930s? Why did the United States accept the loss of control over the sugar industry under Trujillo? Why did the population seemingly acquiesce to the destruction of a populist, social democratic alternative in the 1960s? How violent was the repression of the Left after 1965? Why is there no contemporary Dominican movement to uncover the history of this repression or to punish the guilty, as has emerged in other Latin American countries? How and why did political alignments shift in the 1990s so that Juan Bosch's leftist PLD and former Trujilloist Joaquín Balaguer joined forces in the 1996 elections? The contemporary Dominican diaspora is also entirely absent from the volume. The lack of an index--and the fact that the table of contents does not list the authors of the different documents--makes the collection somewhat difficult to navigate, especially since many readers will want to use the anthology as a reference, rather than reading it cover to cover. However, within the parameters that the editors have set for the volume, it makes a useful and comprehensive contribution. In particular, the editors' introductions to each document do a solid and convincing job of providing the necessary background and context so that the anthology

does provide a coherent narrative, in documents, of Dominican political history. -- HAHR-Hispanic American Historical Review

This book fits into the long tradition, in Latin American historiography, of publishing primary sources. It presents in something less than three-hundred pages a wide variety of documents on the history of the Dominican Republic. Starting with excerpts from the writings of the first Spanish colonists, the editors patiently move through (and provide insights into) colonial history, the nineteenth century, the U.S. domination at the beginning of the twentieth century, the notorious Trujillo dictatorship, and the turbulent political period that followed Trujillo's assassination in 1961, including another U.S. intervention in 1965. Although at the end of their overview they present some sources on contemporary politics, the more recent period after the end of the so-called twelve years of Balaguer (1966-78) remains largely out of sight. The book is aimed at a general public of students and foreigners interested in the Dominican Republic. The didactic purpose of the authors is evident from the explanatory texts that surround the sources. Where many earlier historians were convinced that "the sources speak for themselves," Sagas and Inoa clearly believe otherwise. Providing the readers with succinct and generally well-written introductions to the sources, they construct a fragmented but coherent historical interpretation of Dominican history. Almost inevitably, this vision of Dominican history is mainly political and institutional. The editors attempt to present some sources on social and economic history, but that is by definition very difficult in this kind of collection. Adequate political declarations and institutional texts are much easier to find and to select than texts on sugar production, social change, or racial prejudices, which are often long and drawn out. The greater availability of texts concerning modern history has also led to a preponderance of twentieth-century materials. More than half of the book is dedicated to this period. In order to present a coherent and succinct story, the editors include excerpts from some well-known secondary sources. There is, for example, a long fragment on the fortune of Trujillo written in the 1950s by the then-exiled opposition leader and historian, Juan Bosch, as well as an excerpt from the famous dissertation by Jesus Galindo who was later murdered by Trujillo. The choice to include such materials implicitly demonstrates the limitations of relying on primary sources for periods of dictatorships. Anyone who has been involved in this kind of publication knows how much work - selecting, editing, and translating - is involved in its preparation. The editors should be congratulated for producing a well-edited volume that many interested observers of Dominican history will find useful for a long time to come. -- New West Indian Guide

Ernesto Sagás, University of Central New Hampshire, is the author of *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic*. Orlando Inoa is the author of a book on the Trujillo era.

GOOD BOOK

I am using this book in dual with another book in my History of Dominican Republic Class in college. This book is ideal for people who want to read real historical documentation pertaining to the countries history. Packed with information. My only complaint is that the narrative isn't really told in a story-telling type of way, but more so through expository evidence.

I use this book to teach Dominican history classes at the college level. I find it an easy read, but lacking in more info. Students do not appreciate the small lettering in the documents. In order to get the most out of a lesson, one must pair this book with other readings.

The collaborative editorial effort of Ernesto Sagas and Orlando Inoa, *The Dominican People: A Documentary History* is an annotated collection of documents directly related to five hundred years of Dominican society. From the extermination of the Taino Indians, to the rise of sugar farming, the spread of African slavery, independence from Haiti and from Spain, caudillo politics, U.S. intervention, the Trujillo dictatorship, down to the modern day, *The Dominican People* offers primary sources that give sharply drawn and informatively clear insights into the crucial events that have shaped this history, politics and culture of a proud nation. A valued and very recommended addition to school and community library World History library collections, *The Dominican People: A Documentary History* is also available in a hardcover edition.

Dr. Ernesto Sagas's co-authored "The Dominican People: A Documentary History," a book made up of texts from the history of the Dominican Republic that includes such hits as a presidential inaugurate speech in all its full glory. The texts are preceded by short commentaries (sometimes just one paragraph) that offers very little insight into texts that are poorly chosen to begin with. The claim to fame of this book is that it contains these texts translated into English for the first time....

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